

PERSONAL NARRATIVES  
OF EVENTS IN THE  
WAR OF THE REBELLION,  
BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE  
RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

No. 2. . . . SECOND SERIES.



PROVIDENCE:  
N. BANGS WILLIAMS & CO.  
1880.

Copyrighted by  
N. BANGS WILLIAMS.  
1880.

A COUNTRY BOY'S  
  
FIRST THREE MONTHS IN THE ARMY.

BY C. HENRY BARNEY,  
[FORMERLY CORPORAL FIFTH BATTALION RHODE ISLAND VOLUNTEERS.]

---

PROVIDENCE:  
N. BANGS WILLIAMS & CO.  
1880.

Copyrighted by  
N. BANGS WILLIAMS.  
1880.

PRINTED BY E. L. FEEEMAN & CO.

# A COUNTRY BOY'S FIRST THREE MONTHS IN THE ARMY.

DECEMBER 14, 1861—MARCH 14, 1862.

---

[READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY, DEC. 11, 1878.]

---

Seventeen years ago next Saturday morning, or between one and two o'clock A. M. on the fourteenth of December, 1861, a "solitary" pedestrian "might have been seen" trudging along homeward upon the track of the Bristol railroad, just below what is now called Silver Spring. He was but a simple country lad of seventeen, and had not been engaged in any midnight raid upon unprotected hen-roosts, nor indulging in any worse dissipation than attending a party of young people at the house of a neighbor some two miles distant. As he walked along—ruminating perhaps on the bright eyes and rosy cheeks of the substantial damsels who had been his com-

panions in the games of the evening, perhaps thinking what a foolish thing it was to take an extra mile's walk to escort home the best girl living on such a cold winter night—he discovered a figure approaching upon the track from the opposite direction to that in which he was himself moving.

Travellers on that road at that time of morning were not numerous, and as the stranger rapidly approached, I noticed (for it is time to drop the third person and to say that the country lad and the author of this sketch are identical) that he wore the "blue great-coat" and forage cap of the Union soldier, and as we were passing each other, I recognized to my surprise, a former schoolmate at the Arnold Street school in Providence.

"Halloa! Tom, is that you? what are you doing here and in that dress?" I inquired, and was informed that he was a member of the Fifth Rhode Island Battalion, then encamped on Dexter Training Ground, to which place he was returning from a visit to friends in Bristol. His pass expiring in the morning too soon for the trains, which in those days did not run so early as at present, he had decided to

walk to the city, and thus gain an additional evening in the company of his friends.

We stood talking nearly a half-hour in the moonlight, unmindful of the cold, I eagerly inquiring as to the details of his life in camp, etc., and he willingly giving me the desired information. The result of our conversation was, that when we parted to go our individual ways, there was a fixed determination in my mind that another day should not pass ere my name should be enrolled as a member of the Fifth or Burnside Battalion.

I mention this circumstance to show how the accidental meeting with my former schoolmate finally decided the time and manner of my enlistment, and changed the whole current of my life. From the first call for troops to the time of which I write, I had been anxious to enlist, had twice already inscribed my name upon the enlistment roll, but each time, for lack of the parental certificate of consent, it had been removed. I had but lately returned from a two months' sojourn in Boston, and since my arrival home had not exhibited any symptoms of my former restlessness, and although several young men

of our neighborhood and comrades in the "Barrington Guards," had enlisted in the Fifth, I had shown no desire to join them, and I presume my friends congratulated themselves that I was cured of the "war fever." But the chance meeting with my friend had brought on a relapse of the disease, and it was now raging fiercer than ever before.

But to cut short this personal narrative, I left home the next morning for Providence, without saying a word to any one of my intention to enlist, and that night I slept in a Sibley tent on the Dexter Training Ground, duly enrolled as a member of Capt. Jonathan M. Wheeler's Company "A," Fifth Battalion Rhode Island Volunteers. Recruits were harder to obtain than in the spring and summer, so by a little *finesse* and by assuring the recruiting officer that there would be no trouble, I induced him to waive the proper certificate of consent required in case of the enlistment of a minor, and now that I was clad from top to toe in the livery of Uncle Sam, I felt that the rubicon was indeed passed, and there could be no receding from the step which I had taken.

Judge then, of my dismay, when, about noon of the

second day in camp, I saw my father standing at the head of our company street in conversation with the lieutenant commanding our company. As I did not return home on Saturday afternoon, a search had been instituted, and my whereabouts easily discovered. What passed between my father and the lieutenant, I do not know. Suffice it to say, that perhaps thinking it best to let matters take their course now that they had gone so far, he finally gave his consent to my enlistment, and with much good advice as to the care of my health and morals, bade me God-speed.

And now to speak of the organization of which I was to form a part. Recruiting for the Fifth Rhode Island or "Burnside Battalion," as it was at first more generally called, was commenced in October, 1861, under authority received by General Burnside from the War Department, the intention being ultimately to fill it up to a full regiment. The recruiting posters announced that the "Burnside Battalion" was to be used exclusively for coast service, no long and fatiguing marches were to be endured, it was to be armed with short "English Rifles" and "French

Boarding Swords." To judge from these advertisements, the battalion was to have what would now-a-days be termed "a soft thing." To anticipate a little, we found, however, that there were some "outs" even in the "coast service," and as for marches, we generally had to go about where we were told to, and that was apt to be just as far, for aught we could discover, as troops enlisted under less promising auspices.

As I stated before, recruits were not as enthusiastic in the fall, as during the earlier months of the war, and as the State offered as yet only fifteen dollars bounty, recruiting was, generally speaking, rather slow. Yet, such were the superior inducements offered by this battalion, that in seven weeks five companies had been filled, and the men transferred from "Camp Greene (where the first companies went under canvas), to "Camp Slocum" on the Dexter Training Ground. At the time of my enlistment, there was some snow upon the ground, and the weather colder than we have had it so far this month, yet in our floored Sibley tents, each of which was provided with a sheet-iron camp stove, generally

kept at a red heat, we managed to keep exceedingly comfortable.

Drilling was practiced whenever the weather would permit, with dress parades at evening.

The armament of the battalion differed from that of any Rhode Island regiment previously sent out. We were armed with the short Enfield rifles, calibre .577, with heavy sabre bayonets, (the "French Boarding Swords" of the recruiting posters). Although they presented an imposing show when fixed, in the sunlight, these bayonets made the pieces top-heavy and more awkward to handle than the ordinary kind, not being so well balanced. After we had been in service some eight months, these arms were exchanged for the long Enfields and common triangular bayonets.

Our organization at date of muster-in, consisted of five companies, and the roster of officers was as follows:

Major—John Wright.

Adjutant—Charles H. Chapman.

Quartermaster—Munro H. Gladding.

Assistant Surgeon—Albert Potter.

Chaplain—MeWalter B. Noyes.

Sergeant-Major—Joseph C. Hatlinger.

Quartermaster-Sergeant—William W. Prouty.

Commissary-Sergeant—Charles E. Beers.

Hospital Steward—Charles F. Gladding.

Co. A—Captain, Jonathan M. Wheeler; First Lieutenant, Daniel S. Remington; Second Lieutenant, vaeant.

Co. B—Captain, Allen G. Wright; First Lieutenant, William W. Hall; Second Lieutenant, William W. Douglas.

Co. C—Captain, James M. Eddy; First Lieutenant, John E. Snow; Second Lieutenant, George G. Hopkins.

Co. D—Captain, George H. Grant; First Lieutenant, Henry R. Pierce; Second Lieutenant, James Moran.

Co. E—Captain, Job Arnold; First Lieutenant, vacant; Second Lieutenant, James M. Wheaton.

On the morning of Friday, December twenty-seventh, we received orders to prepare to break camp. Soon after twelve o'clock, noon, the tents were struck, and about half past two o'clock the battalion line was formed and after a review by Governor Sprague, the march was taken up for the depot. The clouds had been gathering rapidly since noon, and as we left the Training Ground, a drizzling rain set in. In spite of this, the usual crowd filled the sidewalks to cheer our departure. Occasionally some spectator, catch-

ing sight of a friend in the ranks, would step out and march a few steps by his side, while he bade him a hasty good-bye.

As we were marching down High street, near the junction of Westminster, a classmate of the High School recognized me and stepped to my side. "Do you belong to this regiment?" said he, "Don't you hold some office?" "Yes," I replied, "I am an acting corporal." "Well, I thought you were something more than a private," said he. As a matter of fact no corporals had yet been appointed in our company, which was the last one organized, although our captain happened to draw the letter A and the right of line. Eight of us had been selected to act in the capacity of corporals and were on probation, so to speak.

At about half past four o'clock our long train was off for Groton, (at that time the terminus of the Stonington line of steamers). I remember every detail as if it were but yesterday. In the seat with me sat a young Irish-American boy of about my own age, whose parents stood beside the car window to bid adieu to their only son. As the train

started he bade them a cheerful good-bye, leaned from the window and watched them standing on the platform until they were hidden by a curve in the track, then sinking back into his seat, he burst into tears. I exerted myself to comfort him, and pictured how comparatively soon he would return and how proud his parents would be of him when he should come home, perhaps an officer. "You are very kind," said he, "but I know that I have seen my father and mother for the last time on earth." Poor fellow, his words proved prophetic; for against his name on the muster-out roll of Company A appear the words, "Died at Andersonville, Georgia, September, 1864."

At Groton, we were transferred to the steamer Commonwealth, which should have started at half past nine, but being aground, did not get off until about one o'clock, and were landed directly at Jersey City at ten o'clock on Saturday morning. From there our route was by rail to Philadelphia, thence to Baltimore, and thence to Annapolis, at which latter place we arrived about seven o'clock Sunday evening. While on the road from Philadelphia to Baltimore,

our captain came through the car and laying his hand on my shoulder, said: "Corporal, I guess you had better put those stripes on now," meaning that he had decided to appoint me to the position. I thanked him, but as it was impossible to follow out his suggestion literally while on the train, I had to content myself with putting on airs instead.

Upon disembarking from the cars at Annapolis, we found ourselves at the foot of a steep embankment, up which we were marched into the grounds of the Naval Academy, the school itself having been transferred to Newport for the time being. As we saw the next morning, it was a delightful camping ground, and commanded a full view of the harbor and all the vessels assembled to take part in the Burnside Expedition. All this the daylight revealed, but at the time of our arrival it was too dark to see anything, so while a part of the men were pitching our tents as near to where they ought to be as possible, the remainder were bringing the company and regimental property up the bank, until finally all was moved and we turned in and slept soundly, for the first time upon the bare ground. A few hours work

next day straightened the lines of our company streets, and put the camp in perfect order.

On the third of January, we were gladdened by the sight of the Fourth Rhode Island Regiment, just arrived from Washington, which marched into the grounds and established camp near us. A letter by me at that time says, "We expect the Second Rhode Island here in a few days." This was camp rumor whether it was ever really contemplated by the authorities for the Second to take part in our expedition, I do not know.

The Burnside Expedition as finally organized, comprised a division of three brigades, commanded respectively by Brigadier Generals Foster, Reno and Parke. The brigade of the latter, numbered the Third, consisted of the Fourth and Fifth Rhode Island and the Eighth and Eleventh Connecticut regiments.

On the eighth day of January we struck tents at ten o'clock in the morning, and embarking on two small steamboats were speedily transferred to the ship *Kitty Simpson*, which formed a part of the transport fleet, and on the following morning we

started down the Chesapeake, in tow of a tug, our destination unknown. Here we were served with rations of hard-bread and raw salt pork cut in slices, and we began to feel that we were fast getting down to the stern realities of a soldier's life.

Of course you will perceive that this kind of fare was entirely unnecessary and was caused by the inexperience of the officers, who a few months later would have caused a sufficient quantity of cooked rations to have been prepared on shore and taken on board with us to last until the cooks should have got their department in working order on the Kitty Simpson.

When, however, matters in the culinary department became fully settled, we fared well enough, and as extra luxuries, were treated occasionally to a ration of "lob scouse" and to a dyspeptic concoction denominated "duff." I am not quite sure of the orthography of the latter, but think an appropriate way of spelling it would be t-o-u-g-h, d-o-u-g-h, "tuff duff" or tough dough—either pronunciation would suit the case.

Leaving Fortress Monroe, after a stormy passage

we arrived off Hatteras Inlet on the thirteenth of January. Most of our men suffered greatly from sea-sickness. As it was found that our ship drew too much water to allow her to pass over the bar into the smooth water inside, details were set at work to lighten the ship by throwing overboard the gravel which formed her ballast. Three days' work lightened us two and one-half feet, and in the tow of the propeller Virginia we attempted the passage. Owing to a heavy fog which came up suddenly, or to some unexplained cause, the pilot of the Virginia varied slightly from the proper channel, and just as we were congratulating ourselves that we were safely over and should soon be riding at anchor with the rest of the fleet which had preceded us into the inlet, a sudden grating, then a shock, told that we were not yet out of danger. A second shock, harder than the first, and the hawser from us to the propeller parted with the sudden strain, and the Virginia, shouting back the advice to let go our anchor, disappeared in the fog, and we saw her no more that day.

Our situation was now anything but pleasant, with

a probability that it might prove extremely perilous. We lay upon a sandy bottom, but the motion of the ground swell caused the ship to rise and fall every minute, keeping up a continual pounding. As we would strike solidly it seemed as if the masts would be driven through the bottom of the vessel, and all the standing rigging would slacken up and hang loosely from the masts; then as we rose again, it would resume its usual taut position. When we first struck it was a dead calm, with the exception of the ground swell, but very soon the wind commenced to rise and blew away the fog, and about a pistol-shot on our port-bow we could see the bare timbers of one of the fleet, which two days before attempted to enter the inlet with a load of horses. Her bones now lay upon a reef of rocks, and should the wind shift before our ship could be gotten off, and the wind is liable to shift half a dozen times a day at Hatteras, nothing could prevent our going to pieces on the same place. As the violence of the wind and waves increased, the thumping of our ship increased also, until loosened from their fastenings by the tremendous strain, the top-sail yards began to tumble upon

deck, causing several narrow escapes before the men could get below out of the way.

It began to look as though there were more desirable branches of service than the "Coast Division." About four o'clock we espied a steamer coming out from the inlet toward us. She proved to be the steamer *Eagle*, formerly a New York ferry boat. As she came alongside, Lieutenant D. A. Pell, of General Burnside's staff, stood on the hurricane deck with the captain of the steamer. As the *Eagle* crashed against our starboard quarter, crushing like an egg-shell the ship's boat which hung there, Lieutenant Pell shouted to our commanding officer that the orders of General Burnside were for him to embark his men on board the *Eagle* and leave our ship to its fate. Before he had finished his sentence the steamer was at least thirty feet away from our ship, and as the next wave swept her again to our side, two soldiers leaped from our rail toward the *Eagle*. One reached her hurricane deck, the other fell short, but as he went down was fortunate enough to catch hold of a fender which hung over her side, and by means of a rope was drawn on board.

In common with most of our men, I had hurried to the side of the Kitty Simpson next the steamer, to see what was going to be done. As I heard the order to transfer the men to the Eagle, and saw that boat tossed about, like an egg-shell, by the violence of the waves, I realized the impossibility of safely transferring a quarter of our men to the steamer, and felt that the attempt would be madness.

But Major Wright was equal to the emergency. Jumping upon the rail, he commanded, in a voice above the tempest and confusion, that not a man should attempt to leave our ship until orders should be given by himself. The narrow escape from death of the soldier I have mentioned, was a powerful argument in favor of obedience, and no more men jumped. Then ensued a short and sharp colloquy between our major and the captain of the ferry-boat, the former desiring that the latter should take our line and attempt to pull us off, believing that aided by the frequent lifting of our craft by the heavy sea, the attempt might be successful. "It is of no use," said the captain, "there is not power enough in my engine to pull you off; the most I can

do is to save your men, before it is too late." But the major insisted with language too emphatic to repeat here, and finally the captain agreed to make the attempt. With what eagerness we watched the attaching of the hawser, and as the steamer started her wheels and the line began to draw, I am sure many prayers went up from hearts unused to prayer, that the attempt might be successful. Tighter and tighter grows the rope, we seem to be moving, no—it is but imagination, for we strike again as solid as ever, and, with a loud report, the tow-line snaps in twain and falls into the seething waters.

But the attempt is not to be abandoned, for an extra large hawser, which has lain coiled between decks all the voyage, is gotten up, one end passed to the Eagle and the other made fast to our vessel. "That line will never part," says Mr. Fox, the first mate, "it will pull the bitts out of the ship first." Again the steamer starts ahead, with her engines crowded to their utmost capacity, and this time,—hurrah! off we slide, and before we hardly realize it we are in deep water and in ten minutes more with the rest of our fleet, the troops on which

have been watching us ever since the fog lifted, and now greet us with hearty cheers as we pass. It was fortunate for us that we worked off the bar as we did, for about eleven o'clock that night came the change in the wind which would have sealed our doom in a very few minutes. As the result of the strain she had undergone, the Kitty Simpson was adjudged too much damaged to be sent to sea again, and after our battalion left her she was used as a store-ship, at Hatteras, and was finally, I believe, beached and broken up there.

Now that our fleet was all inside the outer bar there remained an inner bar, called "the swash," to be crossed before the expedition could advance up the sound. Many of the vessels, our own among the number, were too deep in the water to be taken over the new obstacle, and some three weeks time was consumed in sending to New York for smaller craft, and in transferring the troops.

January thirty-first the Fifth Battalion was placed on board the iron side-wheel steamer S. R. Spaulding (formerly running between Providence and Baltimore), a much larger vessel than the Kitty

Simpson, but of less draft. The Spaulding was the headquarters of General Burnside, and could have easily furnished transportation for a command three times the size of our own. We had been on the Simpson twenty-three days and we left her without regret. When we first went on board at Annapolis we were pleased with the apparent cleanliness of our quarters, everything between decks having been freshly painted and everything looking as neat as a pin. We did not know until afterward, that previous to her charter by the government as a transport she had made one or more voyages in the coolie trade. The consequences to us it is not necessary to detail here; suffice it to say, the battalion saw more skirmishing with gray-backs while on board the Kitty Simpson, than it ever did in the same length of time after getting on shore.

February fifth, everything being at last in readiness, we weighed anchor and the fleet started slowly up the sound, the gun-boats in advance. Fog and other causes delayed us so that we did not arrive in sight of Roanoke Island till Friday, the seventh, shortly before noon. As soon as the gun-boats came

within range the main battery of the enemy, Fort Bartow, opened fire upon them, which was immediately returned. This was kept up during the whole afternoon, the only apparent result being the setting on fire of the wooden barracks inside the battery. The transports lay some distance below the scene of the conflict, our steamer being about opposite the point where the troops were afterward landed. About three o'clock a boats crew from our battalion, in charge of Lieutenant Andrew, Ninth New York Volunteers, acting aide to General Burnside, was sent in near shore to take soundings and ascertain how near our transports could run in for the purpose of landing the troops. I afterward learned from one of the men that they had accomplished their mission successfully, when the lieutenant decided to land and reconnoitre a little as there appeared to be no enemy in sight. But hardly had they set foot on shore when a dozen or more gray-coats rose out of the tall grass growing on the bank, and saluted them with a shower of bullets, which fortunately hit no one. Hastily tumbling back into

their boat, they pulled out of range as quickly as possible, but not until the enemy had given them a second round, this time with more effect. Private Charles A. Viall, Company E, of the Fifth, was struck in the mouth by a ball which took its course along his lower jaw-bone, being afterward extracted under the ear. The clothing of several of the men was struck, and one bullet shattered the blade of one of the oars. This affair gave the Fifth Rhode Island a claim to "first blood" in the Burnside Expedition. Meanwhile the affair had been seen from the Spaulding, and a gun-boat being signaled, ran down and threw a few shells into the vicinity of the scrimmage, and remained there to cover the landing of the troops.

Preparations for the landing were made without waiting for the return of the rowboat. Our men were transferred to large launches which would hold nearly a company, a string of ten or twelve of these were taken in tow by a tug, and in this way the landing was made. Some of the smaller steamers ran up to the shore and the troops landed directly from their decks. The Union, a stern-wheel

steamer of very light draft, and nick-named by the boys the "wheel-barrow," rendered excellent service here, as well as afterward at Newbern, in landing the troops. Our battalion was all ashore an hour before sunset, but some of the troops were not landed until very late in the evening.

That night we bivouacked in a muddy corn field, without shelter of any kind. Soon after dark it commenced to rain, and being as yet "greenhorns," our situation was thoroughly uncomfortable. Sleep there was none. Early the next morning we were on the march for the field where occurred the battle of Roanoke Island. I shall not, of course, attempt a detailed account of the battle, for that is a matter of history, and personally I saw but little of it. I will only refer to a few of its principal features.

The battery of the rebels was upon a narrow neck which connected the upper and lower parts of the Island, and commanded a corduroy road only wide enough for four or five men to march abreast, which road was built through a morass stretching right and left from the battery to either shore of the island. This morass was believed by the enemy to be im-

passable for troops, and in order to give full effect to their artillery, the trees had been felled in front and for some distance on each flank, and left lying so as to form an effective abattis. From the nature of the ground only a small portion of our force could be engaged at a time. Our only artillery was a battery of six boat howitzers, manned by sailors. The turning point of the battle was the flanking of the enemy's position on both the right and left by the passage of the swampy morass by our men in the face of almost insurmountable difficulties. As soon as the Union column appeared from the woods on each flank, which they did nearly simultaneously, the enemy realized their defeat, and abandoning their works, fled toward the north end of the island. Being rapidly pursued by the First Brigade under General Foster, the greater part of them as well as the garrisons of the forts on the upper end of the island, the rear approaches to which were now left entirely unprotected, fell into our hands as prisoners, about three thousand in all. Like many of the regiments of the division, the Fifth Rhode Island was not as a whole directly under the

enemy's fire during the engagement, did not fire a shot, and suffered no casualty, except the case of Private Viall before mentioned. During the greater part of the engagement it was stationed in the woods to the north and east of the landing and just to the left of the battle-field. For about half an hour the battalion was exposed to a most severe ordeal for raw troops, being placed in position by the side of a road leading off the battle-field, along which a constant procession of wounded were being borne to the rear.

After the surrender, the troops were assigned positions in different parts of the island, our own battalion remaining two or three days doing guard duty around the hospital, which was established near the landing place of the troops, and then being sent to Fort Bartow, the principal battery on the western front. In two or three days our tents and baggage came ashore from the Spaulding and we went regularly into the routine of camp duty.

Among the officers of the enemy was Captain O. Jennings Wise, son of General Henry A. Wise, formerly Governor of Virginia. Severely wounded

during the battle of the seventh, he died the next day, and was buried by the Union troops. About a fortnight after, a small side-wheel rebel steamer bearing a flag of truce, came down the sound with a request for his remains, which was granted. I happened to be detailed in charge of a squad of men which conveyed his body from the burial ground to the shore and from thence in a rowboat to the rebel steamer. The officer of the day, I cannot now remember who it was, joined us at the boat and delivered the body to the officers of the steamer. We stepped on board the rebel boat, but were allowed only on the forward deck and remained but a short time.

Our life during the few weeks we were at Roanoke was uneventful, with the exception of an expedition made by our battalion on the steamer Union, to destroy some salt-works on one of the little creeks leading into the sound above us, which were represented as turning out large quantities of salt; but which we found not to be worth the trouble of going after.

The monotony of camp-life on the island was re-

lieved somewhat by the manufacture of brier-wood pipes, there being an abundance of roots suitable for the purpose. Many of the men turned out articles which were very creditable specimens of carving, and I suppose there was hardly a member of our battalion who did not make one or more of these pipes to send home when occasion should offer. A favorite amusement of my own, whenever I could obtain a pass, was to explore the island, searching for traces of, and speculating upon the fate of, that lost colony, which as you will remember, made at Roanoke the first English settlement in America, among the members of which were the parents of the little Virginia Dare, the first babe of English blood to open its eyes upon American soil.

While at Roanoke we were joined by Second Lieutenant Levi F. Goodwin and First Sergeant Robert S. Brownell of Company A, and a number of privates belonging to different companies, who from various causes had been left behind us in Rhode Island, and whom Brownell, who officiated as a sort of Provost Sergeant while we were at Camp Slocum, had been left behind to pick up. With Sergeant Brownell came his

wife, Kady, or Katy as we called her then, one of the vivandieres of Company H, First Regiment Rhode Island Detached Militia. She enjoyed the freedom of the camp in a sort of bloomer costume, more appropriate to the wilds of Roanoke than to the streets of Providence.

It soon became evident that we were not to remain long idle, and preparations having been going on for several days previous, we left our camp on Thursday, March sixth, and with all our belongings, embarked on board the steamers Eagle and Curlew, two ex-New York ferry-boats. My company (A) was in that portion of the battalion assigned to the Eagle, the same steamer to which I have previously referred as assisting us off the bar at Hatteras. These boats had already been used as transports and were quite well adapted for that purpose on inland waters. The two saloons or cabins on either side were closely filled with rough board bunks several tiers high, only narrow passages being left between each row, while the open carriage drives of former days in the centre of the boat made an excellent parade and drill

ground, and the cooks occupied one end of the boat for their operations.

Tuesday morning, the eleventh, the entire fleet, with the gun-boats in advance, started for Newbern, the route necessitating a return to Hatteras and from thence up the Neuse river to Newbern. Wednesday evening, the twelfth, we arrived at Slocum's creek, about eighteen miles below the city, and anchored for the night. I have seldom witnessed a prettier sight than the passage of the fleet up the Neuse river during that afternoon. The river for the greater part of the distance was quite broad, and calm as a mirror, the fleet of transports sailed in two parallel lines, the decks of every vessel being apparently as crowded with uniformed men as are the decks of our summer steamers with excursionists. The weather was delightful, and the constant waving of the signal flags from one vessel to another added life and brilliancy to the scene.

At tattoo an order was read, stating that we were to land in the morning in light marching order, meaning that we were to carry only rubber and woolen blankets (rolled and worn over one's shoul-

der like a sash), haversacks and canteens, and sixty rounds of cartridges, forty in the boxes and twenty distributed about our persons at convenience.

In accordance with these instructions the landing was made the next morning in very much the same style as at Roanoke, except that the shore was less bold and the boats could not approach so closely to the beach as at the island. The men of the different regiments vied with each other in being the first to land, and as fast as each launch grounded, sixty yards or so from shore, soldiers leaped into the water, some up to their knees, some above their waists, and waded ashore. The New York *Herald*, I think it was, gave us the credit of being the first regiment to land, but Color Sergeant Poppie, of the Fifty-first New York, was the first man on shore, and as he planted the Stars and Stripes, cheer after cheer went up from the men not yet landed. As soon as our battalion was all ashore, line was formed, arms stacked, and we sat down about two hours to wait the landing of the remainder of the troops. By that time it was noon, and the clouds which had threatened rain all the morning, now began to pour down

their contents as we took up the line of march toward Newbern. Our road lay mostly through a wooded country, interspersed by frequent clearings, some of which extended to the river, giving us an occasional glimpse of the gun-boats, which were following up our march, keeping nearly abreast of the head of our column.

After about an hour's march we came upon a deserted rebel cavalry camp, which had been abandoned in such a hurry that the dinner of the officers was found smoking on the table, and that of the men over the fires, both untouched.

The marching was heavy in the extreme. The rain had so moistened the clayey soil that it stuck to our feet like so much tar, greatly impeding the progress of the men. Accompanying our expedition was the same six howitzer battery that formed our only artillery force at Roanoke. The crews of these guns found great difficulty in getting their pieces through the mud, the small wheels becoming completely clogged with the stiff clay, and the aid of details from the infantry to pull on the drag ropes was frequently necessary.

About the middle of the afternoon we came upon an unoccupied line of breast-works, over a mile in length, situated in a clearing, having quite an extensive battery at each end of the line. No guns had been mounted and the works were incomplete, the tracks and shovel marks seeming to indicate that the work had but recently been abandoned. Had these fortifications been finished and fully manned, they undoubtedly could have offered a very stubborn resistance to our progress.

About six o'clock a halt was ordered, and the battalion turned into the woods at the right of the road and bivouacked for the night. We were now, as we afterward found, about a mile from the enemy's line, and we were wet to the skin by the drizzling rain, which had been falling all the afternoon. With the exception of the mud, instead of which here was moss and half-decayed leaves, our position was almost as disagreeable as during the night before the battle of Roanoke. We were an uncomfortable set, but the most thoroughly uncomfortable of all, seemed to be Mrs. Kady Brownell. She had started on the march with a pair of ladies' ordinary walking shoes,

but as these soon became saturated with water, one of the soldiers gave her a pair of men's calf-skin boots of a small size, which he took from a house on the line of our march. These she put on, but of course they soon became wet through also, and any one who has ever tried the experiment of marching in wet calf-skin leg boots, can readily imagine the blistered condition of her feet at night. As she sat with her back against a tree, weeping with her head on her husband's shoulder, I imagine she was sighing for the flesh pots of Camp Sprague, and thinking like the rest of us, that there must have been some mistake about the wording of those recruiting posters, which said "No Hard Marching!"

With feeble attempts to forget our wetness and fatigue the night wore away, and by seven in the morning we were moving to the front again. Before starting, we were cautioned to pick out the nipples of our rifles and fresh cap them, a wise precaution, and even with this, many of the pieces missed fire on account of the dampness.

The First Brigade had the advance, followed by our own, with Reno's Brigade on the left, and the

line of battle was subsequently formed in the same order, from right to left. The Twenty-fourth Massachusetts, Colonel Stevenson, had the extreme right and Colonel J. F. Hartranft's Fifty-first Pennsylvania the extreme left. Hardly had we proceeded half a mile, when our ears were saluted by the "crack," "crack," of the skirmishers, and soon the volleys and file firing of the regiments of the First Brigade told us that the battle had begun. Almost immediately we received the order, "Double quick, MARCH!" and following the road perhaps a quarter of a mile further, we turned into a clearing to the left, and then obliquely to the front, and passing through a thin fringe of woods, came suddenly upon the battle-field, and formed "on the right by file into line." Almost immediately we were ordered to commence firing by file.

Our position was about in the centre of the Union line of battle. The enemy's line of breast-works and batteries were continuous from the river on their left to the railroad on their right, while beyond the railroad were a number of works, small lunettes, with a line of rifle pits connecting them.

We were firing perhaps half an hour, although it did not seem a quarter of that time, when a rumor came to us that the Twenty-first Massachusetts had made a charge and succeeded in getting inside the rebel works, but had been driven out again, the enemy rallying as soon as they found the Twenty-first unsupported. As the morning was cloudy and damp, with no wind, the smoke of the firing had long before this become so thick that we could see nothing to the right or left, not even the enemy's works in our immediate front. All at once, we received orders to cease firing, and we noticed the Fourth Rhode Island marching by the right flank to our left and rear. As soon as they had passed, we faced to the right, counter-marched and followed them.

This was the beginning of the celebrated charge which decided the fate of the day. As is now a matter of history, the movement was ordered by Colonel Rodman of the Fourth, upon his own responsibility, through information given him by Colonel Clark of the Twenty-first Massachusetts, and with the advice of Lieutenant Lydig of General Parke's staff, Colonel Rodman being unable to communicate with the

General in the confusion of the battle. It was a most fortunate decision for Colonel Rodman, and gained him his promotion to the position of Brigadier General. Who gave the orders to the Fifth I do not know, but I have an idea that Lieutenant Lydig may have assumed to give the order to Major Wright as coming from General Parke. The charge was made some distance over stumps and fallen trees and into swamp holes, till we struck the railroad track, which we followed through a gap necessarily left in the line of works, into the enemy's lines. About a year later I visited the battle-field, and traced with amazement our movements on the day of the fight. It seemed impossible that soldiers, loaded down as we were, could ever have leaped as nimbly as we did, over the formidable obstacles of the fallen trees, which I have spoken of and which in some cases lay nearly breast-high across our path. Yet in the excitement of the moment we hardly realized that there were any obstacles in our way, and I presume most of the members of this society can recall similar instances which have occurred in their own experience.

During the charge up the railroad, we were exposed to a severe fire from the works on our right and left, and the greatest loss of the day in both regiments occurred here. But once inside the lines we were in the enemy's rear, and as the head of our column entered the gap the rebels abandoned their works and fled. The Fourth immediately swept down the line of works to the right, towards the large battery on the river bank, while the Fifth moved by the left flank, until we came to the brow of a ravine overlooking the smaller batteries to the right of the railroad, which I have previously indicated. These the enemy had not yet abandoned, and his troops which had fled from the main works before us, halted here and made another stand. On the brow of this ravine we formed line of battle and commenced firing, General Reno's brigade continuing meanwhile their attack in front, which had now lasted an hour or more. We were at this time very close to the enemy. I recollect we would load under shelter of the hill, go up on the ridge to deliver our fire, and then fall back to load again.

At one time it happened that Sergeant Brownell

and myself went up on the hill together, I fired, and am not sure whether he had done so or not, when, as I turned to step back to the hollow, I saw him suddenly fall to the ground. For a moment I did not think of his being wounded, supposing he had tripped over the vines, which were somewhat thick on the ground, but he groaned and said, "They've hit me," and I then saw that the blood was commencing to stain the leg of his blue trousers. Dropping my rifle, I knelt down and with my pocket knife cut open his trousers and saw that the blood was flowing freely from a wound in the fleshy part of the thigh. I knew that the thing most needed was to stop the copious flow of blood as soon as possible, so tying my handkerchief loosely around the wounded limb, I picked up a small stick of sufficient strength, and passing it under the handkerchief, proceeded to "take a twist" in it, as we used to do at home, on a larger scale, upon the binding rope of our hay wagons. Continuing to twist, I found that the bleeding was checked, so I made fast one end of the stick, and by this time two of the drum corps appeared and by them he was carried to the surgeon, who had

established himself some distance in the rear. I will only add that Brownell afterward recovered sufficiently to be discharged from the service, in time became able to walk quite well, and I believe is now living in New York with his wife. I have mentioned this incident because it was the first time I saw a man struck in action. Of course, at Roanoke, I had seen many men after they were wounded, and in the charge up the railroad we had lost several from my own company, yet I did not happen to see them fall, and did not know until afterward that any were missing.

About the time Brownell was carried to the rear we received the order to cease firing, and we noticed that General Reno's brigade, becoming tired of standing the severe fire they were receiving, were charging the enemy's works. Some of our officers and men, seeing our opportunity, were anxious to charge also, and from our position I think we could have reached the works before the brigade in front, but no orders were given us, and in a few moments more we saw the colors of the Fifty-first Pennsylvania in the rebel works. Previous to this the Fourth Rhode Island,

having as I stated gone to the right, had charged the flank of Fort Thompson, the large river battery, simultaneously with the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts and the remainder of the First Brigade, from the front, and the whole line of works was now in our hands.

This decided the possession of the city of Newbern and gave us forty-six heavy guns, three six-gun light batteries, three thousand small arms, a large quantity of stores, and three hundred prisoners. This small number of prisoners is accounted for by the fact that most of the six thousand Confederates engaged escaped upon the railroad trains, which were in waiting and all fired up ready for a start. Escaping across the Neuse river, they burned the long railroad bridge behind them, and continued their flight to the interior of the State. It is said that our gun-boats were in easy range of the trains which passed over the bridge, but as one of the cars displayed an American flag they supposed it to be our own victorious troops entering Newbern, otherwise they would have attempted by shelling to have disabled and stopped the train.

Company A lost five men in the battle of Newbern. The loss of the other companies of our battalion, I am unable to state. Among the killed of Company D, however, was First Lieutenant Henry R. Pierce, who was the only commissioned officer struck during the engagement. Lieutenant Pierce had been for several years principal of the Woonsocket High School, but had abandoned his profession and entered the army from a sense of duty.

It was now after eleven o'clock, the battle was over, and a short rest was given to allow the men to eat the noon-meal, which you may be sure was well relished under the circumstances, as our appetite for breakfast had been very light. After an interval of about an hour, the march was resumed up the railroad track toward Newbern, now about four miles distant.

Within a mile of the city the Fifth left the road, and turning to the right toward the river bank, found quarters in a deserted rebel camp. This had been hastily abandoned, and an effort made to burn the tents, which from the hurried manner in which it had been attempted was only partially successful.

About one-third of the tents were destroyed, but enough were left to furnish accommodation for all our men, which accommodation was thoroughly appreciated.

This camp was christened "Camp Pierce," in honor of Lieutenant Pierce mentioned above as one of the killed in the battle. Among the stores which we found were several barrels of burnt rye, used by the Confederates as a substitute for coffee, which latter they were unable to obtain. We tried some of it, but did not like it as well as the genuine article. Probably an "extract of rye" obtained by a different process would have given better satisfaction.

The First and Second Brigades were assigned quarters in and around Newbern, and in about a week the Third proceeded to attempt the reduction of Fort Macon, near Beaufort, forty miles distant by rail.

In the siege of Fort Macon the Fifth bore a conspicuous part, and my original intention was to include these operations in this paper, as well as the Tarboro and Goldsboro expeditions, including the battles of Rahls Mills, Kinston, Whitehall and Golds-

boro, thus covering the first year's service of the regiment. But my paper is already beyond the proper length for a sketch of this nature, and I must leave those matters till another time, or better still, for another writer, hoping that this imperfect sketch, while not attempting to give a full or connected history of the battalion even as far as it has gone, may have brought out some points not before familiar to the members of our society.

